Cites & Insights

Crawford at Large

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Bibs & Blather

Something's Coming, Something Good

Well, *I* think it's good at least—I could make the case that every public library (and every library school) in the U.S., Canada and Australia should buy one.

Public Library Blogs: 252 Examples will be out any day now—literally "any day," probably before mid-September 2007. The 299-page (x+289) 6x9 paperback is a great resource for public libraries considering a blog—and for those that have one and are considering more or rethinking the one they have. It's mostly examples, blogs that have been around since at least December 2006 and show some signs of life. The first three chapters break down blogs in various ways to help point librarians to blogs they might consider.

As I was planning the book and putting it together, I would have assumed that it's not a book you'd read cover to cover. After two cover-to-cover editing passes and two more passes for proofreading, I'm not sure that's true. The diversity of public library blogs is remarkable. The sample posts (one from each blog where a sample makes sense) and metrics paint an interesting picture.

The first announcement will be at *Walt at random* (walt.lishost.org). The book will be available at the Cites & Insights Bookstore on Lulu (lulu.com/walt-crawford). It will cost $29.50 from Lulu. It might be available through another channel. More details—*lots* more details—as soon as it's actually available and in the next *Cites & Insights*.

If every public library and library school in the U.S., Canada and Australia (and other English-speaking countries) *did* buy a copy, the future of *Cites & Insights* and *Making it Work* would be assured—but

that's not likely to happen. Still, I believe it's a valuable resource for those libraries that do buy it, easily worth the thirty bucks.

Making it Work

Some of you know I suspect this section needs to be a separate ejournal—something that can't happen without sponsorship. Why separate? Because there's too much material for a section (the items covered here barely dent my backlog), because it's an area that should continue to grow and diversify as we move from hypewars to the sometimes small changes that move the field forward, because there's plenty of other stuff to cover in *Cites & Insights*. And because doing a really good job in this area requires more time and focus than I can provide when it's just a piece of *Cites & Insights*.

Inside This Issue

As I work on these sections, I find that it makes sense to quote significant portions of the sources—and that commenting on posts as much as six or seven months old can be worthwhile. Unfortunately (for MiW as a section), that means space becomes even more of an issue. For example, when I began this month's episode, I thought I'd deal with three little groups of posts that represent maybe one-quarter of what I have on hand (but in three specific areas). Turns out that, to keep this section at reasonable length, I've dealt with *one* of those little groups—by far the smallest of the three.

What we have here, then, is what might be one of four to six sections in an issue of *Making it Work* (if that's the final name).

Successes and Failures

Crossing two continents and two blogs, we begin with a discussion that speaks strongly to locality and feasibility. In a sense, it's about failure—but it's also about possibilities, ones that may make sense only for certain libraries and their parent institutions.

Peta Hopkins posted "Branded environment—campus collaboration" at *Innovate* (inn0vate.blogspot.com) on March 19, 2007. She starts by referring to a March 6, 2007 post by Brian Mathews at *The ubiquitous librarian* (theubiquitouslibrarian.typepad.com/), "More on the branded environment concept." Portions of Mathews' post:

> A few weeks ago I mentioned the potential of creating a branded environment. I have an example now of how we've failed our students in this regard. A patron who is a friend of the Library wanted to start a book club. We supported her giving her space and permission to post some flyers in the elevators and then pretty much got out of the way.

> She started the book club using a Facebook Group and got about 20 members to join. Yet now she is taking it off FB and moving it to Google Groups. I asked her why and she responded:

> "We think it will be easier to discuss things, for one thing... facebook doesn't really give you a lot of room so it's hard to read replies. Also, a lot of people don't check facebook regularly so we miss out on getting people updates easily. Those are the two main reasons... it just seemed that Google groups would work better."

> I like that they are evolving as they assess their needs but I wish that we or someone else on campus was able to provide an online space for them. This is what I mean by creating a branded environment. A collaborative space with lots of tools that students can use to be productive. Merging the campus portal concept, with registration, the library, the course management system, some social software, etc. NCSU captures this spirit by giving students blogs and wikis, but I'd like to see a bigger enterprise, a central place with lots of tools and information that students actually use…

> That's what I mean about creating a branded environment. I don't think it's something that a library can do alone, but requires participation with others on campus. Giving them content is easy, but giving them tools to do stuff, that's the real challenge.

Did the library fail its students in this case? For smaller libraries (whether public or academic), an appropriate answer might be "Huh?" The kind of library-based collaborative digital creation environment may be so far outside reasonable capabilities and expectations that it's not even worth discussing—and perhaps not within what the community would consider the library's reasonable bounds. At fairly large academic libraries (Mathews is at Georgia Institute of Technology—Georgia Tech—a large [16,000 students], well-respected polytechnic university), such an environment might make as much sense as digital creation workstations do in many public libraries these days. (Just to be clear: I believe digital creation workstations make sense in larger public libraries and some smaller ones—it's part of encouraging community participation and helping the community tell its stories, a natural extension of local library services.)

Peta Hopkins is at Bond University, a private university in Australia (Australia's oldest private nonprofit university). It's considerably smaller (about 1,800 students). Most of what Hopkins has to say about possibilities at Bond, partly reformatted for space reasons:

> Various groups on campus at MPOW have talked at times about providing blogs and wikis or other collaborative spaces. And in fact some of us are using various blog platforms and wikis outside of the 'branded environment' that Brian refers to. Why? Because we just haven't got anything like this on campus -- yet! (Ever the optimist).

> Currently the developments in this area that I know about are:

> * a blog server set up as a pilot for "teaching and learning" use only using WordPress - several student blogs were established and were included as part of the assessment for a course. Previously students were asked to set up a blog on any blog platform/host they liked.

> * trial of 'campus pack' a Blackboard plugin that provides blogs and wikis within the locked-down environment of Blackboard

> […and two library blogs, a potential "blaws," discussion of blogs and wikis, etc…]

> An ICT strategic framework refers to blogs and wikis as desirable collaborative/learning tools. And as it stands there are some great ideas and projects that could benefit the University if these were hosted under a branded environment. But at present they are scattered on the web.

> OK, so if we could provide this kind of branded platform what other great ideas would our community come up with?

> [Bullets combined] Reflective learning journals. Documentation wikis/blogs. Book discussion groups. Wikis that could be used to share/develop procedural documents. Project Planning sites for student projects [or for staff]. Personal blogs for students wanting to write about their learning or student experiences. Student associa-

tion blogs. Research centres writing about their research activities, or podcasting. Staff writing about their personal research or teaching experiences or their area of expertise. Space for collaboration with the university's partners - one group I'm involved in is using a wiki provided by another institution to do action planning and organise a workshop/seminar. University Club menu and specials blog (instead of clogging up our email inboxes). Collaboration on conference papers - last year I tried this with a colleague using Writeboard. Content development - get some inspiration from Wikipedia. Write an online book.

I could be using this kind of branded environment now. Here are a few more thoughts on the concept.

* Policies are important to address concerns about what sort of content is made available to the world - but others are doing it, it's not insurmountable, and in fact there's this pbwiki site I know about where some of this has already been pulled together.

* A mix of open access/closed access is essential to meet needs of various ideas and uses

* A rollout of RSS feed aggregator and the information literacy skills to the majority of the community would really help - perhaps a feed aggregator within Outlook to harness the huge dependence on email

* Mashing up some of this content would be really cool. Mix'n'match feeds to get a snapshot of what's happening on campus in a daily fix

* Syndicating some of this content to show it off on relevant parts of the website means fresh, regularly updated and targeted content

* It's bigger than just one area of the University can manage

Hopkins closes by quoting Mathews' final paragraph. Both agree: This is not something [most libraries, even large ones] can do alone. Unstated, and I really don't have an opinion: Is this kind of branded, web-based collaboration environment something *any* public library should be trying to achieve? Would it be used enough to justify the investment? Is it something a community would expect the library to do or appreciate as part of the library's mission?

No answers. I think the questions—and the discussions—are sufficiently intriguing to include as possibilities.

If You Build It, Will They Come?

That's an applicable question for the branded environments proposed above—and it's a question that applies to most innovations to increase community participation. For commenting on public library blogs, the current answer is "not very often, with a few exceptions." For tagging and user reviews and the

like, there aren't enough cases or history to draw any solid conclusions.

Leaping to a third continent and back to a fairly large academic library (University of Huddersfield in West Yorkshire, UK, with about 20,000 students), we have several posts by Dave Pattern at *"Self-plagiarism is style"* (www.daveyp.com/blog/). Pattern's library added five "tweaks" to its online catalog: "did you mean?" spell-checker suggestions for failed searches; "serendipity keyword" suggestions for failed searches, "people who borrowed this also borrowed…" suggestions; books with similar subject headings; and other editions of books.

Before proceeding with the results, I should say that Pattern offers exceptionally clear and detailed notes (linked to from a March 10, 2007 post) on what each of those five tweaks is actually doing. The "serendipity keyword" tweak is particularly interesting. The "people who borrowed this…" explanation includes comments noting that this feature raises real privacy and confidentiality issues in the U.S. (and some *possible* ways around that). The last two tweaks are becoming fairly common in advanced interfaces, which doesn't make them less worth tracking.

So how did it go?

Pattern reported on early results in an April 3, 2006 post (with the same title as this section). At the time, "other editions" and "serendipity" didn't amount to much—six and 14 "clicks per weekday" respectively. "Similar subjects" was at 36 clicks per weekday, but rising consistently. (None of the tweaks had been promoted.) Then there are "also borrowed" and spelling suggestions, averaging 154 and 222 clicks per weekday respectively. Those are pretty solid figures even for a large university library. Pattern's conclusions? If your catalog doesn't provide spell checking, ask *why*—or do it yourself. He's fond of "also borrowed," but that really does raise questions for most libraries. The other features didn't pop up as often, so it's not surprising they weren't used often. Finally, it's worth quoting this paragraph:

> There's been quite a bit of discussion about Web 2.0's "permanent beta" and whether or not we should be using our patrons/borrowers/students to test out new features within a live OPAC. However, if you can monitor the usage and solicit feedback, then it allows you to roll these features out and (if necessary) quickly remove them, or make them optional.

But wait, as the infomercial would say, there's more! Pattern left the logging running and reported on 11

months of use in a March 10, 2007 post. That post is full of charts and graphs, so this brief summary certainly isn't as interesting (or colorful!) as the post. The daily averages *across 11 months* aren't much different—a little lower for serendipity, a touch higher (16) for other editions, a little lower for similar subject, a *lot* lower for "also borrowed" (70) and "did you mean" (126). But, as the first graph makes clear, that's misleading: It includes several months (summer and holidays) in which the library gets very little use. Looking at the highest month (either October or November 2006) for each tweak, I see almost 6,500 clicks for "did you mean," almost 4,000 for "also borrowed" and almost 2,000 for similar subjects—all usage levels that say these tweaks are apparently helpful to large numbers of users. Other editions at around 1,000 is not huge but still interesting—and as for serendipity, well, it's inherently an odd one, and only seemed to hit around 300 in its peak month.

I wouldn't argue with Pattern's conclusion, with the possible exception of the problematic "also borrowed" implementation: "Even with the least used tweaks, there's more than enough usage to justify the development time, so I'm extremely happy with the graphs." I commented on how nice it was to see real figures—and Pattern responded with *more* information. First, overall usage levels in those peak months—about 11,000 students visiting the library, about 8,000 checking out books. Second, "did you mean" clicks *as a percentage of failed keyword searches*—an impressive 14%. Neat features that people demonstrably use—how can you ask for better?

Pattern revisited the situation on August 15, 2007. Comparing May-July 2006 vs. the same months in 2007, "did you mean" use went up significantly—but "also borrowed" zoomed, easily three times the usage of the previous year. Oh, and overall circulation is up as well. The high level of use of "also borrowed" makes me wonder whether it would be worth someone's time to investigate methods of doing something similar that *don't* endanger borrower confidentiality. I (for one) am unwilling to cede that principle, particularly in an era of NSLs and a government that asserts it is impossible to challenge its "security" operations in court and that the Executive branch is Constitutionally permitted to do whatever it wants, period.

To close this discussion, here's the last paragraph in Pattern's August 15, 2007 post:

> Interestingly, I don't think we've ever had a student go up to a member of staff and say "I've found the sugges-

tions really useful" or "thank you for adding spell checking". I wonder how many complaints we'd get it we turned the features off?

Library 2.0 Usage Results

Dave Pattern has demonstrated substantial use of some online catalog "tweaks"—only one of which (also borrowed) could be considered "Library 2.0" in any real sense. Jeff Scott is a manager at the City of Casa Grande Public Library (CGPL) in Arizona, a library potentially serving about 30,000 people.

CGPL has several "library 2.0 uses," developed beginning in September 2006 and rolled out in January 2007. In a May 7, 2007 post at *Gather no dust* (gathernodust.blogspot.com), Scott reports on usage from January to April 2007 and compares use of some traditional methods and Library 2.0 methods.

The library does audio notes on programs in three topic areas, available on their phone system and as podcasts. In those four months, 15 people listened to the phone messages—and there were 145 downloads of podcasts. They have a library photo album on the library's website and photos on Flickr; the former had 12 photos viewed 125 times during the period, while Flickr had 638 views of 169 photos.

As for mobile communication, the library has all of two Library Elf subscribers—and while it has Twitter followers, "I don't think we have any local subscribers yet." That may be a promotion issue.

There's more, including the following, cited verbatim with no discussion:

> Blog versus email versus web versus paper
>
> Number of bookletters email subscribers: 442
>
> Number of patrons on email distribution list: 598
>
> Number of blog subscribers: 10
>
> Number of people who look at content via the web: 48,989 from January to April
>
> Number of people who read our events via the Community Services Brochure: 30,000 (mailed to each home during the summer and sent in each newspaper in the Fall and Spring, effectively canvassing every home in my community.)
>
> From this I can gather that more people would prefer to receive information via email after they check the website. I think paper and people trump everyone.

Using Wikipedia to extend digital collections

This one's distinctly unusual and I'm mostly referring you to a fairly long article with that title, by Ann M. Lally and Carolyn E. Dunford in *D-Lib Magazine* 13:5/6 (May/June 2007). Lally and Dunford both

work in the University of Washington Libraries. The paper describes the UW Libraries Digital Collections (more than 120,000 imagest, texts and audio files, mostly about the Pacific Northwest) and how they're linking it to Wikipedia. Briefly, they analyzed the collection using Contentdm, developed a subject list and looked for relevant Wikipedia articles. When they found such articles, they would add external links to the appropriate UW online collections and concise summaries of what was there and relevant. In at least one case, UW librarians wrote a new Wikipedia article as part of the project.

The article provides excellent detail on what was done and the results. "Analysis of server statistics indicates that Wikipedia is indeed driving more traffic to our site"—and that trend is steadily increasing.

This appears to be a classic case of getting the resources where the users are, particularly when they're digital resources likely to supplement some other material. The article concludes:

> Web 2.0 technologies offer librarians a great opportunity to enhance the authority of resources that students use on a daily basis, and to push their knowledge and expertise beyond the traditional boundaries of the library. We now consider Wikipedia an essential tool for getting our digital collections out to our users at the point of their information need. We view this as a very low cost way to enhance access to our collections, as well as an effective way to participate in the creation of resources that are used by millions around the world. We will continue to explore how we can take advantage of the opportunities that Web 2.0 technologies offer us when marketing our digital and physical collections.

Other Success Stories

Lorrie Ann Butler and Susan Kantor-Horning wrote "Online library card registration enables free passage to digital gems" in the May 2007 *Computers in Libraries*. Contra Costa County Library serves a large commuter population, so library hours may not be convenient. The library implemented online library card registration and access to their licensed databases; the story discusses the process involved. The system went live on July 1, 2006. Since then, some 3,500 patrons have registered remotely for library cards, with another 4,000 using the in-house online self-service registration system. In a system that potentially serves a million patrons, those may not be huge numbers—but they're people who might otherwise not be served. As the writers conclude,

> The online library card registration system is proving to be a fully developed product of high technical quality. It

has helped to align our library closer to the organizational goal of focusing more on our users and what they want. This service is one example of how the Contra Costa County Library is using new technologies to deliver traditional and new services to its customers.

Also from the traditional literature (and available online), Antoinette Powell talked about "That bloggin' pneumonia!" in a June 1, 2007 *Library Journal* Back-Talk piece. Powell is music librarian at the Seeley G. Mudd Library, Lawrence University, Appleton, Wisconsin. Her director asked whether she wanted to do a music blog—and at the time she felt she was too busy. Some other library blogs were launched without much activity. Meanwhile, Powell attended a conference session where she was advised that a library blog shouldn't be just a bulletin board.

> That's exactly what we were doing wrong. All along, we had thought simply that "if we build it, they will come." We were mistaken. People can find out all the latest library news on the homepage. Why should they click again to a blog that says pretty much the same things?

She took this observation back to a staff meeting and they decided to change their blogging—collapsing multiple blogs down to two and spreading the load by giving all staff members the power to post (making it clear that posting wasn't mandatory).

Once freed of any *obligation* to post—and without having a separate blog that would rise or fall on her efforts alone—Powell found lots of things to blog about: "Once dreading the idea of blogging, I found myself logging in two or three times a day." Since then? There's a Flickr page for new CDs. "We know the word is getting out." (I would note that, for some smaller libraries, the blog *is* the library home page—and if there's a blog, people shouldn't need to "click again" to it—it should come to them via aggregators. Still, this is a case where less is more: Where one multiauthor blog appears to meet *this library*'s needs and abilities better than several specific blogs.)

Laura Crossett is the branch manager at the Meeteetse Branch Library—a library serving a town of 351 people in Wyoming. She wrote about "usability!" on June 8, 2007 at *lis.dom* (www.newrambler.net/lisdom/). It's a long, fascinating post that needs to be read in the original, about the process of usability testing on a shoestring—two people at each of two other libraries in the system, testing the new library webpage Crossett's working on. She learned a *lot* from this tiny sample, coming up with eight changes she plans to make. Her conclusion:

Doing usability testing–even in the small, podunk kind of way that I did it–was hugely helpful. It seems obvious now that people might confuse a catalog search box with a regular search box, but I never would have guessed that on my own. When I've made some changes to the website, I may try it out a few more people and do a final tweaking, and then, I think, we'll be ready to go live.

I'm frequently skeptical of claims that X or Y is true based on tiny samples—but there's little doubt that a small number of usability tests, even ones performed simply and on no budget, can reveal a *lot* about weaknesses in a user interface. One interesting and maybe *not* surprising finding:

The question I thought would be the hardest–"Can you look for information about your genealogy?" turned out to be the one everyone got right on the first try. Everyone clicked on the Research tab, and then scrolled (or used the anchor tags) till they got to the genealogy databases.

Before moving on to a few instances of something less than success, it's worth noting one key aspect of success—nicely put by Katherine (Katie) M. Dunneback at the end of "Achieving success," a May 29, 2007 post at *Young librarian* (younglibrarian.blogspot.com):

The long and short of it is: achieving success is dependent upon how you define success.

Katie (that's how she signs her posts) is talking about personal success, in the context of a "balance post" related to posts by Joy Weese Moll, Michelle Boule and Meredith Farkas. It's an interesting post—but if I was discussing the whole post, it would be in a Balance section, not here. But that final formulation is vitally important when your library is working on new initiatives and evaluating existing services. I was struck by the same idea (maybe not in those words) as I was going through public library blogs: I couldn't possibly say which blogs were successful and which weren't, because success depended so much on local issues and definitions.

Your definition of success may not entail specific goals or benchmarks. It may be a matter of vectors rather than endpoints: Directions, not destinations. That's always been true for my personal and professional life, and that's been a fortunate thing for me (at least until recently). Maybe it should also be true for the initiatives you're considering, recognizing that vectors can fail as readily as endpoints.

Failures and questionable states

I'm making this one semi-blind. It was a signed post from a public librarian on a library list, but I think there's still the sense that list posts are somehow less public than blog posts. In any case, another librarian

was asking for examples of library MySpace pages. This librarian noted that their library's first MySpace page did nothing but attract hard-core porn links and was eventually killed—and the new one might be as well because there's just no action. The librarian goes on to note the lack of any evidence that *any* of the "so-called Library 2.0 initiatives" the library uses—Flickr, blog, podcast, e-ref, de.licio.us, etc.—actually increases patron use of the library. There has been one big success: An email list (such as Listserv™) giving advance notice of library programs and the like. **A list!** Aren't those dead?

Steve Lawson posted "How we done it…bad?" at *See also…* on May 24, 2007 (stevelawson.name/seealso/). Full disclosure: The post is based on a discussion in the LSW Meebo room—and I'm one of the irregulars in that clubhouse. Some of what Steve has to say, and I'm sure you already know that I heartily agree we'd learn from more "failure" stories:

Perhaps we need more "how we done it bad" in our conference presentations. I'd like to see a "lightning talk" session at a conference, perhaps seeded with a few people who have 5 minute talks prepared on projects that just didn't work out as planned: events where no one showed up, grant projects that never came to fruition, "innovations" that were just a pain in the neck, etc., etc.

A quick google search shows that I'm not the first one to think of "how we done it bad" in the library context, but I'd still like to pass an hour with a bunch of librarians trying to top each other with tales of how they messed up.

The comments are interesting, including one sad case where a librarian presented a useful failure example in a conference presentation—and got back comments from people who didn't understand how you could learn from failure. That seems unfortunate.

I'll end with a case that's not clearly a success or a failure—but seems to be trending in the wrong direction: California' statewide chat reference service. Sarah Houghton-Jan posted "The future for California libraries' statewide chat reference" on July 17, 2007 at *LibrarianInBlack* (librarianinblack.typepad.com/), noting the odd situation with the statewide project. First there was funding for 1.5 coordinators. Then one-half. Now, no coordination staff at all—and no coordinated PR or staff training. When the post was written, even next year's funding for the software was up in the air. That was settled—but still no funding for coordination. "Unfortunately, so many of us have seen such low usage as a result of the lack of funds dedicated to the project over the years, that we're now convinced it won't be used—no matter what." There's

a lot more to the post and comments. It's a troubling case. Without addressing the specifics here, I'll close with two questions Houghton-Jan poses near the end of the post, questions that could be raised about other library initiatives of various "generations":

> Why implement something if you're going to let it die? Why throw money at something if you're only going to throw half the amount the project requires to succeed?

And on that slightly negative note, I'll stop.

Following Up & Feedback

I was thinking about the relative lack of feedback on *Cites & Insights* essays (not helped by my failure to include this section in most issues)—and realized I had it all wrong. There's *plenty* of feedback, but most of it appears in blogs rather than as email to me. Given what I said in ON THE LITERATURE, I can hardly object to that. Blogging about a *C&I* piece continues a conversation immediately, precludes censorship (or inadvertent censorship through laziness) on my part, and is generally an appropriate way to respond.

I don't usually pick up blog entries for FOLLOW-ING UP AND FEEDBACK, at least not as feedback. To do so would be a little too recursive for my taste. Some of you will see those responses. Some won't. That's the way it goes with dangling conversations. Most blog entries here continue topics rather than serving as direct feedback.

Seth Finkelstein noted that my criticism of Michael Gorman for synecdoche (using "blog" for "post") may be unfair. It's a usage he's seen fairly often, mostly among people who aren't "old school" bloggers.

Bloggers' Code of Conduct

Ron Miller wrote about the Kathy Sierra situation and O'Reilly's proposed Blogger's Code (*C&I* 7:6) in the June 2007 *EContent*. It's a good summary. Miller's quotes from Tim O'Reilly show just how contradictory O'Reilly's proposal really is.

O'Reilly says he "does not want to play the role of censor"—but that's followed immediately (in the article by "He only wants to set up some community standards to let the community as a group decide when to draw the line." Once you say "draw the line" where speech is concerned you're saying censorship. The distinction appears to be that O'Reilly's happy to see censorship but by "the community." A little later O'Reilly says "You have to tell people when they are out of line." Out of line according to whom? Presumably according to the Code. Who does the telling? The mysterious "you."

Chris Locke of *Cluetrain Manifesto* got in the middle of the whole situation, largely through conscious acts encouraging extreme snarkiness. Even so, it's hard to disagree with Locke's suggestion that, had the Code of Conduct shown any legs, it "could really go in some directions that are really antithetical to the whole notion of what the internet is about." Fortunately, as far as I can tell, the Code was at most a two-month wonder.

Making it Work

I discussed John Dupuis' "My job in 10 years" series in June 2007 (*C&I* 7:6). On June 13, 2007, Dupuis posted the conclusion to that series at *Confessions of a science librarian* (jdupuis.blogspot.com). A little of what he has to say in a seven-page essay that's **well worth reading** on its own:

> The interactive & collaborative web are opportunities; failing to seize the opportunities will come back to haunt us as institutions and as a profession. Engaging the net generation is also a formidable opportunity; failing in that task isn't an option…

> Our patrons and the social and technological tidal wave they are riding is what is going to drive us to embrace transformation and change.

> So, if my extended ramblings over the last two years have a main theme, it's that libraries and librarians have to be able to embrace transformation, to go with the flow. Where once we had a monopoly on research, back in the day when you had to come to the library to get anything done, now our students have options. And we want to remain one of those options.

> We have to move on several fronts… [for example]:

> We will have to accept and be at the forefront in changes in scholarly communications patterns. Open access, wikis, blogs, social networks, whatever, we don't want to be viewed by the new generation of scholars as behind the times….

> We need to become the social learning space on campus. This is vital. We have to transform our physical spaces to make then as collaborative and inviting as we possible can, to be the premier technology labs on campus for creating assignments. This will be a battle as labs in departments will see this as their mission as well. We also can't risk abandoning older roles for our physical space….

> As for our virtual spaces, we need to build systems that are flexible, scalable, modern, responsive, appropriate, usable, fun, social, studious. It's not going to be easy….

What is the thread that binds all these forces acting upon us? All of these follow from the notion that we really need to figure out what we want to spend our money on. We have large budgets, mostly spent on staff and collections. We must continue to invest in the best staff with the best, most forward-looking skills. The new library I envision won't have fewer people, it will have more, they'll just be doing different things. They'll be highly professional and highly skilled in a range of areas, some generalists, some with very a very narrow focus. So, where will the money come from for the transformation? I have to think that it might be from collections….

At the same time as all these forces are buffeting us, we must also avoid what I call vision drift. In our rush to embrace the new, to be all things to all people, to catch the wave, we must absolutely remember that our core mission is to serve the academic mission of the university. If we try to become a second student centre or cafeteria, then I'm not sure we're on the right track. It's great to be a social and collaborative learning space, but most of us didn't become librarians to serve coffee to teenagers.

I'm leaving out a *lot* in these excerpts. Dupuis also offers a few second thoughts on what he's said during the two-year series of posts. For example:

I sometimes think I'm overestimating the speed at which print books will decrease in importance. For sure, the decline probably won't happen anywhere near the same way outside scitech fields, but even in scitech fields I'm not sure we won't be buying more textbooks and popular science than I thought before…

One of the things which I suspect I'm underestimating is the speed at which search & discovery will be transformed by new search tools, new OPAC platforms and the changing nature of scholarly communication…

And speaking of scholarly communications, I also think this is an area where I'll be completely surprised by what happens, and surprised a lot sooner than I think. This will be one of the most fun areas to watch…

If I were starting this project all over, I would definitely start with an environment scan. I would look at both the trends and characteristics of the millennials as well as higher level forces that are affecting and changing the higher education environment.

I can see no good way to excerpt the three long closing paragraphs. In the last, Dupuis clarifies that he's less committed to realizing *the* future he's imagined than to bringing about *a* future, "one that is good for our patrons but one that also has me in it. And I think that's what we should all aspire to in our professional lives, to bringing about the best future we can imagine, for ourselves and our patrons."

In the July 2007 Making it Work, I quoted portions of Pete Smith's "What are we for, revisited" (at *Library too*, havemercia.wordpress.com), finishing the excerpts with "If libraries are everything, eventually they will be nothing." Smith followed up in "What are we for?" on July 2, 2007, saying (in part):

Getting people in is a good thing. Having a lively community feel is excellent. *But* I still can't help thinking that if we don't say clearly why we want people there we will be in trouble.

Libraries must still function as libraries, providing a service not found elsewhere. Libraries are distinctive because they make accessible the products of human imagination, and the people who work there care about that. The environment in which this takes place should be as comfortable and welcoming as possible; and an impromptu party is a wonderful indicator of how people value the space. But if this kind of service becomes the focus, what will be the point of libraries? Why will they be needed instead of other community venues?...

This is not a change resistant position. Rather it is a call not to fetishise change, to not identify change with progress, to be careful as we extend ourselves.

To do all this we need a balanced approach; to know what we should be doing and have a clear idea of why; and we need to know when we can say no. The reasoned 'No' is still important.

Pew Do You Trust?

Bo Kinney posted "I'm a connector" on June 21, 2007 at *The letter z* (letterz.wordpress.com). He notes a brief June 20, 2007 memo from John B. Horrigan of Pew Internet & American Life, "Don't blame me: It's the phone's fault!" and got to the little quiz at its end—the quiz (differently worded, I think) that resulted in Pew's offensive "Lackluster Veteran" label for me and a few million other Experienced Skeptics (as I discussed in *C&I* 7:8). Kinney found that he's a Connector, one of Pew's favored categories—people who "surround themselves with technology and use it to connect with people and digital content. They get a lot out of their mobile devices and participate actively in online life."

Here's where it gets interesting—a few excerpts from Kinney's essay (yes, it's an essay-length post; Kinney admits that he likes to "discourse at length," which I'm not one to complain about!):

Well, ok, I guess. I don't have any mobile devices, though, no blog and no wireless laptop. (Which, incidentally, is why I'm sitting in the DC Public Library and frantically trying to peck this out before my Internet time runs out.) Maybe this makes me one of those Luddites I've been hearing so much about lately. But I suppose the quiz did the best it could with the answers I gave it… [Kinney then provides longer answers to Pew's questions, including these:]

[Re feeling overloaded or liking having so much information available:] Well, actually, I feel overloaded *and* I like having so much information available. I think that I am becoming something of an ICT junkie, in fact, at least in terms of the Internet. Heaven knows what would happen if I stopped being a Luddite and got myself a cellular phone…

[Does Kinney like that cell phones etc. allow Kinney to be more available to others?] Not really. This is actually what I like least about cell phones and other mobile devices. I don't mind having others available to me, but I'd prefer to be available only when I want to be. I guess this means I do think ICTs give you less control over your life.

[Is Kinney more productive because of all those electronic devices?] Yikes. I don't even want to think about that one. I suppose I do produce more using my electronic devices than I do with my non-electronic ones. But I also spend vast quantities of time doing things like reading RSS feeds in a very unproductive fashion. So if you measure productivity as amount produced divided by time spent, I'm afraid the answer would be no.

I'm worried about how difficult these questions were to answer, and I wonder how that reflects on Pew's classification. I do believe, though, that Pew used a far more detailed set of questions for the actual study. I suppose the quiz I filled out is just a game, just another piece of information for me to consume. And now, hopefully, for some of you to consume as well in your unproductive RSS feed reading. I'm glad I could pass this on. After all, I'm a connector.

The brief memo discusses "themes" that emerge from the typology document to explain "why many Americans are not tuned into the information age." Horrigan's on my bad side already, since he seems to assume that if I'm not using ICT tools 24/7 I'm not "tuned into the information age." The two themes are usability and utility—lots of people have trouble getting new gadgets to work and "many technology users simply do not associate ICTs with greater levels of control or productivity in their lives."

Short response: **Well, duh.** "Only" one-third of respondents who have cell phones or internet access agrees "a lot" with the proposition that ICTs make them more productive. This clearly distresses Horrigan, but not me. I've been more connected than usual the last two-three weeks, for various reasons—and *much* less productive than usual, until I turn off the connections and focus.

A group whose aim was to *study* the effects of the internet on American life might say, "That's interesting: Most people who have access don't find it makes them more productive." But Pew is not a study group, at least not any more: It's an advocacy group. So the brief paper goes on to draw "lessons" on how to get two-thirds of us to be more enthusiastic. Oddly enough, the issue doesn't seem to be *making* us more productive—just getting us to *believe* that ICT makes us more productive.

One remedy makes sense: "The technology industry could improve how it designs gadgets, especially for older Americans." Let's set aside the possible ageism here… The second remedy: "Efforts to convey the social benefits of ICT use to several segments of the population would have substantial payoffs." Then there's that sad admission that "some people will probably remain **technological contrarians**." [Emphasis added.] You know: Lackluster Veterans and Connected but Hassled people—18% of the adult population, who know how it works but aren't enthralled, plus all those others who (by Pew's standards) just haven't learned the drill yet. There's damnation by labeling again: Even though we seem to reflect the attitudes of *two-thirds of cell and internet users*, we're "contrarians." Why? Because we're not on board with Pew's enthusiasm.

The more I read of Pew lately, the more disturbed I am. When you start calling people who are both knowledgeable on a topic and reflect the supermajority view of that topic "contrarians," you're stretching the language a little too far.

On Disagreement and Discussion

Steven Bell offered this feedback on that PERSPECTIVE:

I did enjoy reading your reaction to my *Inside Higher Ed* essay—in the piece titled "On Disagreement and Discussion." I think you have some valid points, and I knew folks would argue some of my points by sharing their own observations of "plenty of discussion and disagreement." However, in the comments to the essay only one person could point to a written defense of Gorman—otherwise there was not much evidence of individuals siding with or coming to Gorman's defense. I don't doubt there are disagreements, but I wanted to focus on the lack of more discourse. While there are some incidents to which you and others can point, I continue to believe that gratuitous praise far outweighs serious discourse or disagreement. But your comment and those of others will have me looking more closely for signs of discourse.

I certainly didn't expect anyone to still be bringing up that "silence in the stacks" *IHE* piece. I still think my comments are misunderstood. I think you do a good job of pointing out what I was trying to get at—even if you might disagree with it to an extent. Many jumped to the misunderstanding that I was saying there are no academic librarian bloggers. Heck, I point out some of them in the article. My point was that there was no one

in the profession dedicating their blogging to the "issues of the day" as I call them. Even the person who blogs as "academic librarian" does not consistently blog about academic library issues. We certainly try to keep on topic over at *ACRLog*.

On the first point, I hadn't focused on whether people were defending Michael Gorman (who seems quite capable of defending himself). On the second—well, I guess part of the issue is whether a blog must be *dedicated* to a single topic. *Caveat Lector* isn't dedicated to either open access or institutional repositories, but I consider it to be a source of serious commentary in both areas, and thus a source of serious commentary on some aspects of academic librarianship.

Daniel Cornwall, who was quoted in the essay, wrote "Of mad dogs and loved ones" on July 24, 2007 at *Alaskan librarian* (alaskanlibrarian.blogspot.com). He's puzzled that I got the impression that either he or Mark Sanborn *might* be suggesting that civility be used as an excuse to avoid disagreement—and agrees that there's a huge gap between loved ones and "mad dogs," but the people within that gap are "all still people and have their…dignity and we need to be respectful in our disagreement." That's an excellent point.

On the Literature

Laura B. Cohen offered this feedback on that PER-SPECTIVE (also *C&I* 7:9):

> I've been reading your latest issue of *Cites & Insights* with (as always) great interest. I was especially struck by your comments about the peer review process and the timeliness of publication. As you know, I've blogged about this issue often enough.
>
> I think that many academics who publish for peer-reviewed journals have horror stories to tell. My most recent peer-reviewed article (my ninth) was delayed by two years due to a mess with the soon-to-be-moribund journal *Research Strategies*. The only "good" thing about this incident was that the article was posted online a few months before the issue came out in print. In another situation, an article of mine was accepted at a top tier journal within two months, but the editor lost track of the acceptance. After many months, I worked up the courage to ask him what was going on. Only then was my article re-discovered.
>
> I'm on the editorial board of *Information Technology & Libraries*. Occasionally we have fast-tracked articles and gotten them out within a few months. A good editor (and by this, I mean the editor of the journal) can work wonders.
>
> I think that the pressures of Web publishing will change the nature of peer-review publishing. But given what I see in academia, I think it will take a new generation of scholars to make it happen.

As I noted to Laura, *ITAL* is my "home journal"—if I ever do another scholarly paper, it's likely to wind up there. I've refereed articles for *ITAL* as well and can speak to the role of a good editor in assuring fast turnaround.

Eric Schnell wrote "Scholarly communication metrics must change" at *The medium is the message* (ericschnell.blogspot.com) on July 30, 2007, based partly on my ON THE LITERATURE perspective—but he's writing about issues of Authority, and I note his comments below.

A gratifying large number of bloggers commented on this essay. Thanks to them all, although I'm probably not mentioning them all here. Jennifer Macaulay posted "The value of library blogs" on July 23, 2007 at *Life as I know it* (scruffynerf.wordpress.com), noting (in part):

> I have to say that library blogs are also my primary source of information about library issues as well as my primary means of discussing said issues. To me, liblogs are an invaluable resource. If I don't read about something via one of the hundreds of blogs to which I subscribe, chances are that I will not hear about it at all.
>
> In all honesty, identifying relevant titles and articles and wading through scholarly journals has absolutely no appeal. I don't mean in any way to imply that they aren't important or vital to the library field. However, unless I'm doing research on something for school or work, flipping through peer-reviewed journals is something that I am extremely unlikely to even pretend to do... Blogs actually make it easier to identify articles of importance—and bloggers often give overviews of an article's content. I have found that blogs have much more impact on my day-to-day life as a librarian than scholarly journals ever could—which makes them more critical to my own professional development.
>
> What does all of this mean to me? It means that I am not particularly interested in writing scholarly or peer-reviewed articles, especially at this point in my career and my life… I have become very comfortable with the blog medium. It suits me. I can explore my ideas and think about issues in more creative ways. The ideas and thoughts of other library bloggers challenge me and force me to think about things in new ways. I find it rather edifying.
>
> The world of library blogs adds a wonderful and dynamic element to the ways in which librarians talk about their craft. Blogs create an atmosphere that is conducive to meaningful conversation. Should more people take blogs and the discussions that take place in the liblog world seriously? Definitely!

Paul R. Pival posted "Blogs vs. traditional literature" on July 24, 2007 at *The distant librarian* (distlib.blogs.com). Some of what Pival has to say:

I, too, get most of my current library info from blogs; both the original thoughts of their authors, but also pointers to the best of the traditional print literature. I try to stay current with the print literature, but it's so much more convenient to receive postings in my aggregator (though I do of course receive what TOCs I can via RSS). I recently read an article about IM reference service, and actually started at the list of references to see if any blog postings were referenced. Not a one. While the article was solid, I wondered if the authors had read the most current information from the front lines—the reports from the bloggers…

There's great information in the traditional literature, but there's also wonderful information, sometimes even written by the same people, in the blogosphere. I read it and I'm proud of it. I write it, and I'm proud of that too. But I'm preaching to the choir here, aren't I?

In a portion of the post not quoted here, Pival points to "Bright is the old gray," Lorcan Dempsey's take on my opening sentence, posted July 23, 2007 at *Lorcan dempsey's weblog* (orweblog.oclc.org). Noting my use of "gray literature" as a label for blogs, *C&I* and the like, Dempsey responds:

Gray? Gray! Blogs, reports published on the web, web journals: these are brightly colored and shining. They are connected to the life of the web—link and search—and are visible, referencable and available.

In contrast most of the formal library literature is a very dreary affair. Dull publications, hidden for the most part from the web. Determined not to have any influence outside their niche. Gray, Gray, Gray ….

I think we need to revise our terms ;-)

The web has shone a light on the formerly gray; the formally published seems to want to stay in the shadows and become the new gray.

Tara E. Murray posted "Shades of gray literature" at *DIYLibrarian* on August 7, 2007 (diylibrarian.org/). She'd just gotten a rejection from her first submission to a peer-reviewed journal when *C&I* 7:9 came out and was taken by the lead sentence of the essay. Her comments:

In preparation for writing my article, I did a literature review and read some scholarly articles. I also read a lot of blog posts and online publications. Reviewing the journal literature was helpful for background, and uncovered some things (mainly having to do with special libraries) that hadn't been reported elsewhere. But for the most part I found the journals to be seriously behind the curve.

By the time I revised my article and submitted it to another journal, and then waited for review and publication, it would really be old news. While the idea of publishing in a peer-reviewed journal is appealing, in part because I work in a research environment, it is neither required nor supported in my current position. My

real motivation in writing this article is sharing a story with my colleagues, and most of them are probably more likely to read it on a blog or listen to it at a conference than they are to pick up a journal and read about it there….

I think there is probably a place for all kinds of literature in our profession, but right now it's all I can do to keep up with the gray literature, and it feels more relevant to me as a practicing librarian.

I absolutely agree that there's a place for all kinds of literature—and with the rest of the post as well.

T. Scott Plutchak (tscott.typepad.com) has devoted extended effort to making traditional library publishing work well; he edited the *Journal of the Medical Library Association* for six years. In the August 10, 2007 post "Publishing faster" he notes the biggest disappointment of that tenure: "my complete failure to reduce the time lag between submission of an article and its actual appearance." He says the new crew is doing better—but since it's producing a print quarterly, it's still unlikely that an article can appear within five months of submission. Scott takes issue with Schnell's conclusion that traditional publishing "can no longer be the trusted source for the dialog and communication going on in our profession" and notes ongoing problems with Haworth in particular. Scott mentions alternatives—open access, online, but still fully peer reviewed. He concludes:

On many campuses today, librarians are working with their local faculty to encourage them to make smarter choices about where they submit their manuscripts. Librarians should do the same. If you're unhappy with "traditional publishing," your first step should be to quit sending them manuscripts and quit serving on their editorial boards. Publishers will only adapt when they're forced to.

I should note Christina Pikas' July 28, 2007 post at *Christina's LIS rant* (christinaslibraryrant.blogspot.com), "I believe in research…" Part of what Pikas has to say (and what she says relates to more than one of my essays):

I believe in evidence. I believe in carefully planned, well-executed, carefully analyzed, and well-presented studies of user behavior... Doing research is hard work. It takes a really long time and planning — and everything can go wrong…

There's plenty of room for this-is-how-I-did-it articles, columns, thought pieces, and commentaries—but to really move our field forward, we need actual evidence. This evidence can come from qualitative or quantitative research, if that research is well-planned, carefully executed, and appropriate to the problem… The reports of work completed must be reviewed by peers in the field who are competent to judge the appropriateness of the

methods used, the claims made, the analysis used. It *does* matter!

…I'm not concerned with scholarly and authoritative (right now). I've read some poor articles from authorities in our field—the evidence needs to stand for itself. Using fancy language to hide poor execution is not good, either.

I want to be clear: I'm not opposed to blogs going on CVs or being counted as professional work. Columns and thought or theoretical pieces belong on CVs, so why not blogs?..

I enjoy blogging and I think it's a great way to develop ideas and communicate with others in our field and adjacent fields. I think there are many ideas that deserve to be captured in a more permanent format… I think that bloggers who come up with these fabulous posts should take the time and discipline required to develop the posts into articles and, at minimum, archive them at D-List or E-LIS…

…I hate to see young librarians with fabulous ideas [failing to publish formally]. Get a mentor, get help getting started, and publish!

I would note that there's no good reasons blogs *can't* be permanent (and there's nothing inherently permanent about a refereed journal). *C&I* is being archived by a third party (the OCLC Library). Would *C&I* essays be somehow more worthwhile if I recast them as traditional articles and archived them at E-LIS? I don't see how. Would that make them more suitable for indexing, which *C&I* apparently is not? Maybe—and I'm not sure why.

On Authority, Worth and Linkbaiting

Seth Finkelstein commented on this essay (*C&I* 7:9) in a July 24, 2007 post at *Infothought.* He says my comment about Britannica's linkbaiting working is off the mark—PageRank as displayed publicly is "typically a few months old." I like his note about the Britannica Blog: "It's actually not a bad blog on its own term, a bit like an upscale liberal-arts type magazine. But that's not going to draw readers like taking a stick to the web-evangelist hornet's-nest will." Personally, I unsubscribed after a while—but I don't take the upscale liberal-arts magazines either.

Wayne Bivens-Tatum wasn't responding to my essay when he posted "Thoughts on Authority" at *Academic librarian* on July 20, 2007 (he couldn't have unless he was prescient, since the issue appeared on July 22). It's an interesting commentary about the general issue of authority and how academic librarians tend to treat it—which is, he suggests, with more respect than it may deserve. Excerpts:

Academic librarians are very un-postmodern. They like Authority, at least in some senses.. The notion of Authority helps us both in academic collection development and in reference. We don't have the time or expertise to read and evaluate everything we buy or recommend, so we often rely upon some authority to distinguish the best material.

But what are we doing when we use Authority as a criterion for scholarly materials? Surely none of us believe that because Renowned Professor A published this article in Standard Scholarly Journal B that the article is thereby true, even if we believe in notions of truth… The scholarly conversation captured in books and journals and even blogs isn't necessarily any better because of who wrote it or where it was written, but we often act as if it is, using Authority as a metonym for something else. I'm not sure what that something else is, though. Truth? Probably not. A certain standard of scholarly rigor? Maybe…

I've seen that in a lot of standard introductions to students, evaluating information often boils down to authority of some kind, rather than if the work is well reasoned or carefully researched…

Tips for evaluating websites usually have the same approach. Who wrote this? What's the url? Where is the page from? Does the author have the right credentials? I'm not saying this is bad. I do the same thing myself… But is this anything other than a shorthand way of evaluating something without reading it? Would what I write, for example, be any different, any better or worse, if the url of this blog were different or if I had a different job title?

When we challenge students to evaluate information sources, the "authority" of the source should only be one method to evaluate the source, and even then only if it's a relevant criterion. We need to emphasize that "authoritative" means that a work has met some standard of criticism and has been judged a worthy entry into the scholarly conversation by someone or some group, but that it doesn't mean the source is "right" or "true," and it doesn't necessarily mean other sources aren't also useful or reliable…

We also need to understand when the notion of authority has no relevance (as when there is no author), and when we have to substitute some other standard of value instead. For Wikipedia and other wiki products, what would that standard be? Or perhaps a more relevant question — what can the shorthand criterion be if we can't use Authority the way we've been used to?

Alice Sneary points to one possible answer (or set of answers) to the questions in that final paragraph in a July 25, 2007 *It's all good* post, linking to "The new metrics of scholarly authority" by Michael Jensen in the June 15, 2007 *Chronicle of Higher Education*. (The post has the same name minus the "The.") Jensen

proposes seventeen measures and says, "None of those measures could be computed reasonably by human beings." He seems to believe that they *could* be computed automatically—and I wonder. Here's the list, with numbers added:

1. Prestige of the publisher (if any).

2. Prestige of peer prereviewers (if any).

3. Prestige of commenters and other participants.

4. Percentage of a document quoted in other documents.

5. Raw links to the document.

6. Valued links, in which the values of the linker and all his or her other links are also considered.

7. Obvious attention: discussions in blogspace, comments in posts, reclarification, and continued discussion.

8. Nature of the language in comments: positive, negative, interconnective, expanded, clarified, reinterpreted.

9. Quality of the context: What else is on the site that holds the document, and what's its authority status?

10. Percentage of phrases that are valued by a disciplinary community.

11. Quality of author's institutional affiliation(s).

12. Significance of author's other work.

13. Amount of author's participation in other valued projects, as commenter, editor, etc.

14. Reference network: the significance rating of all the texts the author has touched, viewed, read.

15. Length of time a document has existed.

16. Inclusion of a document in lists of "best of," in syllabi, indexes, and other human-selected distillations.

17. Types of tags assigned to it, the terms used, the authority of the taggers, the authority of the tagging system.

Sneary offers useful comments about which of these could reasonably involve social networking (5-7, 9-10, 13-14, 16-17) and some other notes.

To some extent, 4 and 5 are classic measures in a new form—and 1-3 rely on "prestige," thus classic Authority once removed. (Portions of 6, 12, 13 and 17 are also based on classic Authority.) For that matter, 11 is a classic Authority method to exclude independent researchers and bozos like me. #10 strikes me as a prime candidate for gaming the system: If it's possible to compute, it's possible to use as a way to assure that some section of a paper (or post or whatever) has "the right stuff," the Proper Phrases. I cannot for the life of me see how Using the Right Phrases in any way implies quality, originality or authority; it

certainly implies a knowledge of appropriate clichés, but is that really a good thing?

I realize as I write this that most of my quibbles are meaningless given the context of the article. Jensen is not proposing metrics for worth, truth or quality. He is proposing metrics for *scholarly authority*—the "reputation" a scholar (not a writer, a *scholar*) has or deserves. That's quite a different thing.

As noted above, Eric Schnell feels that the metrics for scholarly communication need to change. What he says cuts across both essays. Here's part of Schnell's post:

> In an era when the library world changes every 18 months, all too many important library related topics are irrelevant once they go through the glacier like 9-18 month publication cycle. Yet, in the eyes of promotion and tenure committees that paper I wrote in 1994 on Gopher remains *to this day* more important than this blog—mainly because it was peer reviewed prior to publication and quality indicators can be tracked through ISI Web of Science.

> This blog, and the blogs of my colleagues, serves as a very important scholarly communication tool… This blog allows me to get concepts out there as I think of them and receive instant feedback from a qualified network of peers who may, or may not, agree with me. This blog allows any idea I present to be discussed, questioned, and debated upon by a networked peer review community through comments and referrals. Any one of my posting may go through a more thorough post publication review that any one of my print articles…

> ..Promotion and tenure committees must take the time to learn about, and give credit for, the new methods of scholarly communication instead of relying on scholarly publishers as the sole tool in establishing the importance of our contributions.

> The problem becomes metrics. How does one quantify the impact that a blog has? The number of subscribers? The number of comments? The number of trackback links? Each has its own set of issues, many not unique to blogging. For example, some have complained about blog cliques which comment and link to each other's posts and in effect boost their individual Technorati rankings. This is not unlike the scholar that references a colleague's work and in effect boosts their citation report. The difference being the turnaround time and ease in which the boosting can be accomplished.

The Speaking Life

Here's an odd case: The email suggesting a followup arrived several months *before* the issue (*C&I* 7:7, Mid-June 2007, COAP2)—because it was related to earlier (republished) material about speaking fees (originally in *C&I* 7:2, February 2007). Alane Wilson, then of OCLC, noted that I "didn't include anything…for

people like us—employees of organizations/companies who are full time salaried staff." I didn't deal with corporate policies on speaking.

I didn't say much about that because many organizations either have their own formal policies or their own informal assumptions and those policies are likely to differ wildly. So, for example, applying OCLC's rules, when I spoke at Washington Library Association this year, OCLC considered it work time and covered all expenses—and I didn't accept an honorarium (nor would I have been allowed to keep it). I'd be surprised if high-level employees at most library vendors accept fees or expenses when speaking to current or potential customers of those vendors. On the other hand, while I worked for RLG, unless the speech was directly related to my work at RLG (most of them weren't), money issues were my own business—and I might or might not need to use vacation time to do the speeches.

Alane says, "I'll bet universities have policies on this." It would be interesting to know what those policies are, and I suspect they vary widely. My understanding is that many academic institutions allow employees to retain copyright and earnings on writing even when that writing is work-related, but require that patents be turned over to the university for work-related inventions. Speeches are much closer to writing; I'd anticipate that the same rules would apply. I could, of course, be dead wrong.

Conferences & Speaking

Dorothea Salo showed up several times in this special issue (*C&I* 7:7). A July 18, 2007 *Caveat lector* post makes a promise she may have trouble keeping: "Conferences, the last post." You should **read the post itself**—and the earlier post linked to in the first paragraph, which comments at length on some issues raised in *C&I*. Here's part of what Salo has to say:

> I believe, more and more strongly as time passes, that the mega-conference and the association conference as currently constituted are on their way out, so all this wrangling over compensation models will eventually become moot…
>
> What do these conferences do? What are they (de facto or de jure) *for*?
>
> 1. Provide social networking and reunion opportunities.
>
> 2. Provide a venue for vendors and (potential) clients to meet-and-greet.
>
> 3. Provide face-to-face meeting time and space for the association.

> 4. Provide résumé opportunities for those who need them.
>
> 5. Provide opportunities for idea exchange, professional growth, and learning.
>
> …I go to conferences for point 5. I'm the one you see carefully annotating the conference schedule so that I maximize my learning time. I don't care about the vendor floor, I'm happy to see people but it's not the highlight of my day, I'm not doing association business (yet), and my résumé's quite healthy, thanks.
>
> Nerds like me are in a distinct and (I believe) shrinking minority…
>
> What's more, the Sage on the Stage model is about as tired at conferences as it is in the classroom. The kind of learning more and more librarians need can't be got from a Sage on the Stage…
>
> …Eventually some enterprising association is going to decide that conference-session money is better spent—on almost anything, really…So what will association conferences look like then? Me, I think they'll split into several pieces. Vendor expos will be vendor expos, and they'll be cooperative events handled regionally, with profits split among sponsoring associations… Association business will move online, because it's dead stupid that it hasn't already done so.
>
> And the teaching and learning will take place at smaller, tightly-focused venues…
>
> I think that'd be a good world, a more honest world, certainly a better world than the one we've got for conference nerds like me. It's a world that will respond faster to what librarians need, because it'll be attendees (rather than conference committees) deciding how and with whom to group themselves for best learning…
>
> My crystal ball is murky when it isn't outright broken. Librarianship also has a remarkable capacity to resist good, even necessary, ideas. So maybe the association conference as currently constituted will last out my career.
>
> If it does, it won't be for intrinsic merit or even interest, however.

I'm leaving out chunks of her post, including one section that suggests that she believes conference sessions at ALA were badly attended (based on "what I hear"). That certainly isn't my experience: With one exception, the sessions I tried to attend at ALA were either full or overflowing, including an 8 a.m. session on the thrilling topic of MARC field and subfield usage.

I guess I don't believe there's any such animal as *the* association conference—at least not based on the two dozen (or more, including repeats) state library association conferences and absurdly large number of ALA conferences I've attended. Some associations spend serious money to bring in Big-Name Speakers—sometimes non-library speakers. Some don't; if they

bring in out-of-state speakers at all, they make sure they get their money's worth (and it's usually not lavish money). Some associations spend very little conference time on business meetings (as a nonmember, I've seen cases where such "what do I do now?" slots are nearly invisible). Some, ALA perhaps foremost among them, probably spend way too much time on administrivia that could better be handled online.

Will association conferences change? In some cases, sure—just as they have over the years. Some states go to biennial conferences. Some join up with other associations or other states for larger conferences. I wouldn't be surprised to see fewer conferences with "outside" speakers. I *would* be surprised to see exhibits split off from sessions—both for money reasons and because I see interactions among attendees and between attendees and vendors that don't split neatly along those lines.

Will the traditional state or national conference disappear, or exclude vendors, or entirely exclude business meetings? I'd be surprised, and I'm not sure it would be a good thing. As to the biggest of them all—well, the 2007 ALA Annual Conference set an all-time record for attendance, and I'm pretty sure it's not because libraries are so awash in money that they just had to send lots of people. As to the long term: My crystal ball's no better than Salo's.

Net Media
Wikipedia and Other Wiki Notes

It's been six months since my last commentary on *Wikipedia*—more than enough time for new controversies to arise, be discussed and fade away. I'll look at one or two of them, plus a variety of miscellaneous issues and a cluster of articles on *Wikipedia*. I planned to note developments at *Citizendium* as well—but I think that's premature, other than to say that *Citizendium* has not disappeared.

First, some notes on wikis within librarianship. Are we better off with one substantive, growing wiki or with multiple wikis on the same or similar topics?

Casey Bisson's opinion is clear from the title of his April 24, 2007 post at *MaisonBisson* (maisonbisson.com): "Please, Not Another Wiki." Excerpts:

> Ironic secret: I don't really like most wikis, though that's probably putting it too strongly. Ironic because I love both Wikipedia (and, especially, collabularies), but I grit

my teeth pretty much every time I hear somebody suggest we need another wiki.

> Putting it tersely: if wikis are so great, why do we need more than one of them?

> I think my concern is that wikis appear to depend on either very large or very, very active communities. Critical mass doesn't come easily, and just because anybody in the world can edit a page, doesn't mean they will…

> [Quoting John Porter:] "personal value precedes network value." That is…

> …each person on the network needs to find value for themselves before they can contribute value to the network.

> Blogs are intensely personal, wikis less so. Issues of "ownership" and our definition of "personal" all play a larger role online that might have previously been imagined. One of the mistakes of Web 2.0 is the notion that users will generate content for free. Money may not be the issue, but "value" is….

> [E]ven without an economic theory to explain it, none of us has ever heard of a "wikier," even as the world appears overrun by bloggers. ("Wikipedians" are the exception that proves the rule.)

> Perhaps I cringe at any suggestion to create a new wiki because I wonder why that content can't be published on an existing wiki. Perhaps I cringe because I wonder if the proprietary motivation to create a new wiki is itself in conflict with the community nature of wikis. Perhaps anybody can have a blog, but it seems to take a whole community to raise a wiki.

Most commenters disagreed at least in part. "Jennimi" said this on the same day (among other things):

> I have been exploring the usefulness of wikis in different situations and feel there is real potential there if, as you say, critical mass is achieved. Thing is, as an academic librarian, I am also excited when I see folks try new things (even fail! but hopefully, learn something?). I don't think they're the "end all" or perfect for every use requiring easy online editing across a group of folks…. but I'd like to be open to the potentials.

Ryan Deschamps offered this comment on April 27:

> I find that software support wikis are immensely useful, since Wikipedia is not going to get into the nitty-gritty of how to develop templates for Drupal.

> I also like wikis for "one-off" projects like organizing a conference, or even attending a conference. Seeing people's schedules for Computers in Libraries was quite helpful to me when I was there.

> And using a wiki for presentations is not the worst thing you could do.

> That said, coming up for a wiki, hoping that everyone will just join in on your pet project is a certainly misguided and often performed waste of virtual space.

I would never attempt to read Casey Bisson's mind, but I'm not *entirely* sure that there's as much disagreement among these three statements as might first appear. I'm assuming that "why do we need more of them?" is deliberate overstatement—unless you add "for a given purpose." If I was posting on this (and since I've never built a wiki I've avoided doing that), I might very well use Bisson's title but would offer a somewhat different terse take:

Why do we need more than one wiki for a given purpose in a given field?

Never mind *Wikipedia*; it's pretty much *sui generis*. (If *Citizendium* succeeds, it will *not* be "another *Wikipedia*.") I'll point out one specific example in the library field—and it's certainly not the only one.

LISWiki (liswiki.org) began in June 2005 as an attempted "niche encyclopedia." Among other things, it has pretty solid and growing lists of library-related blogs: One for liblogs (non-organizational blogs) with links to pages for academic library blogs and public library blogs, and smaller lists for other types of organizational blogs.

But there's also the *Blogging Libraries Wiki* (http://www.blogwithoutalibrary.net/links/)—exclusively for institutional blogs, pointing back to *LISWiki* for liblogs. When I was working on my book on public library blogs, I needed to combine lists from two wikis, finding substantial but far from complete overlap. Should that be necessary? Should it all be in *LIS-Wiki*—or, on the other hand, are we better off with more focused wikis? I'm not sure.

A more extreme case may be *Library Success Wiki* (http://www.libsuccess.org/)—not because it's extraneous but because there's a tendency for people to start new, smaller wikis about local success rather than contributing to this group effort. Meredith Farkas founded *Library Success Wiki* and posted "Let 100 wikis bloom?" on May 1, 2007 at *Information wants to be free* (meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/), a followup to Bisson's post. Excerpts:

> Often, when people talk to me about creating wikis about very specific aspects of library and information science, I suggest that they just add a section to the Library Success Wiki. It's not that I hate competition. It's because I know that, more often than not, the other wiki will not get used very much (unless it is a directory project a la Blogging Libraries). And I know that we're all better off having a smaller number of wikis that really get used than a lot of wikis that get lightly used at best…

> I've seen a lot of examples of niche wikis, both inside and outside of the library world. I understand why peo-

ple would want their own wiki. It's a good experience to install the wiki, develop content, an organizational scheme, etc. And those of us who have blogs are so accustomed to creating unique blogs to fill a niche. While that does work well in the blogosphere, it doesn't work in the wiki world. Maybe also people don't feel comfortable carving out a space of their own in a wiki created by someone else. However, this is what a community wiki is all about. They belong to all of us.

> Wikis are all about getting large numbers of people to collaborate and share information in a single space. It's about strength in numbers. If we "let 100 wikis bloom" we each get a smaller pool of people contributing to each of them. We're much stronger coming together in a single space to do that. That way, people only have to remember one URL, they only need to create one account or profile, and they would feel a lot more connected to a single community than they would to a bunch of wiki communities…

> Obviously there are certain topics that wouldn't fit into the Library Success Wiki. Maybe they'd work in LIS-Wiki, which is more like an encyclopedia for our profession. And certainly I'm not suggesting that people put institutional knowledge within Library Success. For institutional knowledge, you really do need your own institutional wiki…

> And if there's something you don't like about the wiki you want to add to, change it. You have as much right to make changes as the administrator does (other than on the server side). I'd love to see the Library Success Wiki better reflect the needs and interests of the profession.

> Because we are so much more powerful together.

I didn't see much in the way of new constructive comments here except for one that said something similar to Deschamps—that is, that special-purpose wikis can make a lot of sense, as can wikis built just for the experience of building a wiki. Farkas explicitly agrees—but for "knowledgebase wikis" of more than local value and more than limited duration, her point is, I believe, solid.

Here's where I stand at the moment, for what it's worth—which is very little in this case:

➢ Blogs and wikis are very different tools. Blogs favor the individual (although group blogs can work well) and are *explicitly* publish-and-respond (or, if comments aren't supported, publish) mechanisms. Most posts on most blogs don't change once they're posted; if they do change, the change is usually very visible within the post itself. Blogs are also designed for streams of individual items in reverse chronological order. Wikis favor the group and are explicitly designed for group contri-

bution over a linked range of topics. They're designed for change within each item (where changes can be tracked but only if you're patient and know how to look for changes). They're not designed for publish-and-respond conversations; they're designed to build coherent topical structures. Chronological order only comes into play on history pages.

➢ When related content that could be in one wiki is spread across two, four, a dozen wikis, it's less visible and harder to relate. A small library's success story will have far more impact if it's on the *Library Success Wiki* (assuming that wiki remains healthy and growing) than if it's on one of a dozen smaller wikis that may or may not have "success" in their name.

➢ None of which says that you shouldn't create a wiki just to see how it works (and then take it down or note that it's just an experiment— or open a new niche!). None of which says that project wikis, conference wikis, what-have-you don't make sense. Like blogs, wikis are lightweight publishing mechanisms; they serve a range of purposes.

➢ Maybe it's "unremarkable" (as a snarky comment notes) to suggest that, before you think about creating another wiki, you ought to consider contributing to and using existing ones. So be it. Remarkable or not, it's still good advice.

Now back to the big cheese—*Wikipedia*.

Wikipedia

I use *Wikipedia*. Of *course* I use *Wikipedia*—and I think I have a pretty good idea when it's essential to crosscheck against other sources. For most pop culture and many computer tech issues, it's a great first stop and frequently all you need. For that matter, I used *Wikipedia* as a backup when working on my book on public library blogs, for those cases where Worldcat Registry doesn't show the service population for a library (either because it's a non-U.S. library, because it's part of a larger administrative unit, or whatever reason). If I couldn't find the service population on the library's website or in a linked community website, I took the city or county population from *Wikipedia* as a rough estimate (although I also verified the information via email to the libraries). Why not? That's the kind of demographic information that Wikipedians have made real efforts to populate and

it's pretty much all verifiable through other sources—but that takes longer.

I do *not* buy the idea that *Wikipedia* makes other encyclopedias obsolete, that it's the world's best encyclopedia or any other such grandiose notion. I am increasingly offended by the copout used for errors in *Wikipedia*—the "fix it yourself" line. I am much *more* offended by the notion that truth is arrived at by consensus, but maybe that's because I live in a country where that would mean evolution is nonsense. I have had experience with something I've seen noted elsewhere: When you get to topics involving something other than just facts, topics that you *personally* know something about, *Wikipedia* can sometimes be quite strange…and no, it's *not my job* to "fix" it [and try to keep it fixed], particularly since these are frequently matters of opinion and perspective.

Continued coverage of problems and issues with *Wikipedia* seems justified because it's so pervasive and because the claims of its founders and supporters tend to be extreme. I discuss problems with libraries as well, and I hold libraries in high regard.

The Essjay Situation

Here's one where the story arc was short: From late February 2007 to early March 2007—and most of what I have here comes from two blogs, Nicholas Carr's *Rough type* (www.roughtype.com) and Seth Finkelstein's *Infothought* (sethf.com/infothought/) Not that there wasn't lots of other commentary, but these two provided more than enough. Go to *Infothought*'s February and March 2007 archives for more; searching "EssJay" on *Rough type*'s archives-and-search page may get what you need (that blog doesn't seem to have month-by-month archival access). I'm excerpting from both blogs, generally without direct quotation; I regard Carr and Finkelstein as reasonably reliable sources. (I've never me either one. Finkelstein and I have a long-running history of email and blog back-and-forth, while to the best of my knowledge Nicholas Carr neither knows nor cares that I exist.)

It's all about "Essjay"—a "particularly dedicated and well-qualified" Wikipedian discussed in the *New Yorker* article I noted in *C&I* 7:3. According to that article, he holds a Ph.D. in theology, has a degree in canon law and is a tenured professor of religion at a private university who has written or contributed to sixteen thousand entries on *Wikipedia*. He was also one of the admins and checkusers, giving him unusually great power.

Except that Essjay was really Ryan Jordan, a 24-year-old who has never taught and holds no advanced degrees. When the *New Yorker* disclosed this (in a February 2007 editor's note), it quoted Jimmy Wales on the issue of a fake persona with fraudulent credentials: "I regard it as a pseudonym and I don't really have a problem with it." Wales hired Jordan for Wikia, Wales' for-profit concern.

That wasn't the end of it, of course. Some people were disturbed about Ryan's lies. Other people were more concerned about Wales' diffident response—since, when it comes down to it, Wales has the final word at *Wikipedia*. There was a *lot* of commentary in various venues. Attempts to support either Jordan or Wales' defense of him came off as particularly lame.

By March 3, the jig was up. Wales asked Jordan to resign from Wikia with a somewhat disingenuous message, saying his "past support of EssJay in this matter was fully based on a lack of knowledge about what has been going on." It still didn't seem to be a problem that Ryan lied repeatedly about real-world credentials—but the *exposure* of those lies made *Wikipedia* (and Jimbo) look bad. Much of EssJay's history disappeared from *Wikipedia* and a "retired" page appeared instead—along with, of course, loads of support from those who still didn't feel that he had done anything wrong.

Finkelstein pointed out the key sentence in Wales' decision to get rid of "EssJay": "I only learned this morning that EssJay used his false credentials in content disputes." Wales *absolutely* knew that Jordan lied to the *New Yorker* writer. He presumably knew that Jordan lied in a letter to a professor. But, as Finkelstein puts it:

> That's lying to those *outside* The Family.
>
> But he *used his false credentials in content disputes*. That's serious! It's an IN-WORLD offense! It's *inside* The Family.

Jordan is gone—at least under the EssJay identity. Some significant number of people seemed to feel that was a shame: That it's OK to lie about your credentials, a harmless form of role-playing. Others dismissed it as an isolated incident and noted that Wales eventually did the right thing. Others saw the whole situation as emblematic of corruption at the heart of the enterprise.

I'm not offering an independent opinion here. There's a level of hypocrisy in saying that *Wikipedia*'s model ignores credentials while simultaneously giving some contributors more power than others, the kind of power that credentials might normally justify. The more I look at that aspect of *Wikipedia*, the more I get a whiff of *Animal Farm*—but that's as far as I want to go. I think it's worth reminding people of this story, even six months later. The two bloggers noted here (and others, who you can reach from links in their stories) think about this stuff a lot more than I do; take the time to read what they have to say (and follow some links). Then make up your own mind whether it all matters. I believe it does—not to discredit *Wikipedia* as a to-be-checked resource but to question the model and its general and specific applicability.

Miscellany

An April report from Pew Internet & American Life says that more than a third of American adult internet users (36%) consult *Wikipedia*—with more usage among better-educated, higher-income and younger people. It also says that, on a typical day, 8% of those surveyed used *Wikipedia*.

So 64% of internet users *don't* consult *Wikipedia*? I find that possibly more interesting, particularly given the tendency of *Wikipedia* to show up high in search engine results.

Gary Price offered some quick reactions to the report in an April 15, 2007 post at *Resource shelf* (www.resourceshelf.com). Excerpts:

> Do people only utilize Wikipedia because they don't know that other resources exist be it Encarta (as you know, most of it is available free if you know how to find it) or that many libraries offer free remote access (from any web computer) to many general purpose and specialized encyclopedias?...
>
> We often hear from some Wikipedia users that they use it as a starting point but would always verify with other tools. Sounds like a decent plan. However, do other users (at all user levels) know that other tools are easily available?...
>
> + Do some users realize that new projects, like Citizendium exist and, at least on the surface, have different controls who can and cannot enter/edit material?...
>
> + Is Citizendium a service the librarians need to support?
>
> + Do users understand both the strengths and weaknesses of Wikipedia? In other words, do they understand how it works?...

Stephen Abram used the occasion to rant (his word!) about educational institutions that ban *Wikipedia* (in an April 29, 2007 *Stephen's lighthouse* post), noting that it needed "contextualizing," not banning. It's an angry post that makes a good point, although I question Abram's seemed equating of *Wikipedia* with other

encyclopedias. College students should never be citing any general-purpose encyclopedia without other reference sources—but that doesn't make all encyclopedias equally reputable or disreputable.

Steve Lawson offered a very different perspective in "So what can we teach using Wikipedia?"—a May 10, 2007 post at *See also…* (stevelawson.name/seealso/). Discussing *Wikipedia* with faculty members and others, he suggested not banning it, but rather using it as an example for evaluating sources. The post recounts a fascinating experiment done in a Renaissance Culture class. The students worked as groups to build encyclopedia entries on topics assigned by the professors—and part of the assignment was to upload the entries to *Wikipedia*. Lawson introduced them to *Wikipedia* and its concepts, showed how traditional encyclopedias differ in covering Renaissance topics, talked about encyclopedias as "tertiary sources"—and the students did their thing. Lawson's post has links to the assignment-related wiki, which in turn links to the posted articles (or what's left of them) and provides the original versions as posted. He thought it was regarded as a success, even if it's not repeated. His closing comment:

> I hope that students came away with a more critical attitude toward Wikipedia–not critical as in "negative," but critical as in greater understanding of how the sausage gets made. I hope that those lessons are generalizable to their reading and research on and off the web. At the very least, I hope that when they do use Wikipedia they'll think back to this experience, and have a better understanding of the site and what uses it might and might not be appropriate for.

Christopher Harris took a slightly different tack in his June 8, 2007 *Infomancy* post "Wikipedia: Less bad than irrelevancy" (schoolof.info/infomancy/). While including some verbiage about the survival of libraries that I think wildly overstates the case, he does say that it's somewhat pointless and self-destructive to attack *Wikipedia* as "bad" or "wrong." Instead, he offers "ten ways to express reservations about Wikipedia while avoiding being seen as someone who doesn't get it." It's quite a list—and one where I don't believe excerpts would be useful. **Go read the post.**

One ongoing, multifaceted controversy regarding *Wikipedia* is its policy on biographical entries for living people. There's the "Daniel Brandt problem," where a critic of *Wikipedia* faced unfair and unfortunate entries, and the problem faced by Seth Finkelstein and several others who just didn't want to be there at all. *Wikipedia* will delete a biography if the

Powers that Be decide the person isn't sufficiently notable—but they won't delete it if they decide he or she *is*, even if the subject doesn't want to be there. (Seth Finkelstein's February 23, 2007 post on the Brandt situation resulted in one of those comments that just makes me cringe, this time from Crosbie Fitch: "All knowledge is consensus, which is to say that there is always disagreement, but on some things more people are agreed, or more reputable people are agreed (depending upon your perspective)." I'm sorry, but no matter how much you qualify the statement, "All knowledge is consensus" is simply appalling. As Andrew Orlowski responded, "No, Crosbie—you can't vote for the truth.")

Or at least that was the case. On June 14, 2007, Finkelstein noted changes in Wikipedia policy "allowing some consideration of a living person's requests to opt-out of a biography page." Indeed, as of this writing, there is no entry for Finkelstein—or for Brandt. (In Brandt's case, as Finkelstein notes, it took 14 iterations of the "internal process" before Brandt's request for deletion finally worked.)

Wayne Bivens-Tatum, the *Academic librarian*, posted "Wikipedia and the word of God" on July 18, 2007. He makes a point that's sometimes important when comparing *Wikipedia* entries to those of some traditional encyclopedias: It's harder to judge the entries because they're unsigned. To some extent, we assume authority for signed works where the author has clear credentials. That's not possible in *Wikipedia*—and maybe it's an obsolescent view of "authority." Go read the post—and the related July 9, 2007 "Two cheers for Wikipedia."

The First Monday cluster

The March 2007 and April 2007 issues of *First Monday* (www.firstmonday.org) include four articles on *Wikipedia*. I'll just point you to them, if you're interested in more stuff on the topic. Read the articles at least as critically as you'd read anything in *Wikipedia* itself. I found John Willinsky's March 2007 article most interesting, but that's personal—and I have a real problem with one of the April articles that equates "quality" with being a "Featured Article" in *Wikipedia*. The study "demonstrates a crucial correlation between article quality and number of edits"—but it's really demonstrating a correlation between number of edits and being chosen *by Wikipedians* as Featured. That could be considered self-correlation: "Whatever we spend most time on must be the best."

Is Web 2.0 Safe?

That's the way Robert McMillan poses the question in a July 2007 *PC World* "News & Trends" article—and it's a question that almost answers itself. Samy Kamkar managed to shut down MySpace by creating a worm "no firewall could block." The Samy worm only messed with users' *online* data (their MySpace profiles), but that's not a long-term guarantee.

For that matter, is it OK if "only" online data gets compromised? Thought about your Gmail archives, your Flickr account, your blogs and wikis—or, for those of you really into new software, those documents and spreadsheets you create with Google Desktop or Zoho Office?

This article discusses "cross-site scripting attacks" and "cross-site request forgeries." The first finds a way to cause malware to run within your browser; the second takes advantage of the fact that most people don't log off sites when they're through with them—and can give an attacker "unfettered access" to any website left in that condition. (Do you *ever* leave a banking site or anything like it without explicitly logging off? You shouldn't.)

For more traditional threats, how many malicious websites are out there? I don't mean snarky or offcolor or gossipy. I mean sites that distribute viruses and other malware. According to a post at *Rough type* on May 21, 2007, Google's current estimate is one in a thousand—and apparently Google's already uncovered a million web pages that do "drive-by downloads," infecting your computer when you visit the site.

Uncompressed Video

If you have HDTV, you're probably aware that some HD video sources look better than others. One reason is compression. Some cable companies compress video a *lot*, resulting in artifacts, softness and other deficiencies. Supposedly, the least-compressed HD source around is over-the-air broadcast TV.

Do you get uncompressed high-def video from sources such as HD DVD or Blu-ray? *Not even close*. An article in *Home Theater* discussed possible ways to transmit uncompressed high-def signals from a source to the TV and mentioned the signal rates required for uncompressed video.

1080p video requires a data rate of 3Gbps. That's three *billion* bits per second—or three gigabytes every

eight seconds. Or 22.5 gigabytes (GB) per minute. That may or may not include uncompressed 7.1-channel sound; for now, let's assume that it does.

A single-layer HD DVD disc holds 15GB. It could hold 40 seconds of uncompressed 1080p video—except that you couldn't possibly stream that much data off the disc at such a rate. In practice, an HD DVD disc needs to hold at least two hours of video, maybe more. That comes out to *at least* 180:1 compression.

Blu-ray has more capacity, and you can use double-layer discs with 50GB capacity. So you could theoretically have as little as 54:1 compression on a Blu-ray disc.

The *actual* maximum data rate for HD DVD is 36.55 mbps, indicating that the minimum compression ratio is 82:1. The maximum data rate for Blu-ray is 48mbps, so the minimum compression ratio is a mere 62.5:1. In reality, compression rates are likely to be much higher.

I put this here instead of in the occasional "Tracking High-Def Discs" section because it's about video in general. Oh, by the way, broadcast HDTV maxes out at 19.39 mbps: It's substantially compressed as well, even if the broadcaster hasn't carved out some of that data rate for side channels.

Second Life Notes

Sure, this belongs in NET MEDIA, but that's been hijacked by Wikistuff and blogging for the most part. Anyway, this isn't a PERSPECTIVE, just some notes along the way. First, there's "Who's on third in Second Life?" by Lori Bell, Kitty Pope, Tom Peters and Barbara Galik, in the July/August 2007 *Online*. It's an interesting article with some real oddities. For one, the authors define "Library 3.0" even before there's consensus as to Library 2.0—and they define it surprisingly broadly:

> We define Library 3.0 as the next phase of the Internet—the new Web… This year, 2007, is the year of Library 3.0.

Defining "the new Web" in library terms is pretty ambitious. So is the claim that 2007 is "the year of" virtual worlds—never mind the question of whether World of Warcraft and Second Life are comparable "virtual worlds" in any useful sense. The writers offer the "more than 5 million residents" claim for Second Life in April 2007 but do have the sense to note "some question about the actual demographics of SL." Still, saying "More people register than actively participate" is an understatement, given that even Linden

Labs people now admit that 90% of registrants do *not* participate. It's a little like saying more computer owners are aware of Apple computers than actually own them: True, but somewhat misleading

This sentence really stuck in my craw, especially with the implied universalism:

> As academic, nonprofit, and medical organizations, as well as schools, expand their presence in Second Life, libraries *must* do the same *to remain viable.* [Emphasis added.]

That's pretty strong stuff, and note that the word "some" doesn't appear before "libraries." "To remain viable"—not just to be trendsetters. That "remain viable" phrase crops up again later. The authors "believe that environments such as Second Life are the next phase of the Internet." That may be true, although the rapidity with which new users flee from Second Life might give one pause.

Whenever library activities in Second Life are mentioned, we hear the claim of visits by "5,000 avatars a day"—which you'd expect to be a lot higher by now if the supposed growth of Second Life is all it's cracked up to be. How many of those avatars are non-librarians who use library services? That's not clear.

There is some good stuff in this article, but the hype bothers me. Not that there's anything new about hype when Second Life is under discussion. An interview with a Linden Labs person in the June/July *The Perfect Vision* cites "200,000 individuals who go into Second Life on a daily basis." It's hard to know what that means in terms of overall ongoing usage—but it's almost certainly the case that "individuals" means avatars, not people. Some indications are that there's an average of 1.5 avatars per active human user.

Before you say, "Wait a minute, that 90% abandonment figure must be a straw man—Linden Labs would never admit that!" let me point you to the July 2007 *PC World* and Dan Tynan's "Gadget Freak" column, "Traveling the Web's Third Dimension." Here's a direct quote:

> Catherine Smith, Linden Lab director of brand strategy and communications, says roughly 10 percent of people who sign up for an account become active residents, which puts the real population at around half a million.

Tynan seems to *like* Second Life and think it's the wave of the future—but he admits it's usually "deserted" ("My avatar wandered through many ghost towns and vast empty landscapes"), hard to use and demanding.

Doing a little searching, I find that Linden Labs people have *generally* said there's a 10% "conversion rate"—but "conversion" only means going back at least once, a month after signing up: It's a ceiling, not the floor of truly active users. That floor is certainly (almost certainly) more than the 94,000 premium accounts worldwide. Linden's own count for "active avatars" in June 2007 shows right around 130,000 from the U.S.; that suggests fewer than 100,000 *people* in the U.S. currently using Second Life. It would be interesting but difficult to deflate the 130,000 count by those who registered within the same month and may never return.

Clay Shirky has been one of the leaders in questioning Second Life numbers, primarily at *Many2Many* (many.corante.com). In a January 29, 2007 post, he noted, "there are many interesting things going on in Second Life"—but also that "Linden's Residents figures are methodologically worthless" (a claim for which Shirky offers extensive documentation). He raises two issues: whether Second Life is likely to *become* "a platform for a significant online population" and what Second Life can "tell us about the future of virtual worlds generally." As to the first, he's doubtful: "I predict that Second Life will remain a niche application…of considerable interest to a small percentage of the people who try it." He notes that SL's high rate of abandonment is *not* a problem with all "visually traversable spaces," offering Doom and Cyworld as counterexamples.

Shirky's comments on objections to his skepticism are priceless—particularly from a writer given to claims I tend to be skeptical of, particularly when he's dismissing ontology. He notes the first response: Skepticism on X turned out to be unwarranted, therefore skepticism on Y is wrong. In other words, it's always wrong to be skeptical about anything—because skepticism was once refuted. The second: Demographics don't matter—only the interesting things matter. Which is fine, unless you're being told that this is the wave of the future, not an interesting little niche. Shirky also notes that claims of SL advocates have shifted: When nobody questioned Linden's "Residents" numbers, the rapid growth of SL population was evidence of its success. When it became clear that the numbers were neither large nor growing all that rapidly, some advocates declared that large usage was irrelevant. Shirky: "A hypothesis which is strengthened by evidence of popularity, but not weakened by evidence of unpopularity, isn't really a hypothesis, it's a religious assertion."

As to the second issue, Shirky does *not* regard SL as predictive for virtual worlds in general—partly because he doesn't believe "virtual worlds" is a coherent category. World of Warcraft and Everquest may be as much "virtual worlds" as Second Life—but they may not have much else in common with SL. Shirky notes that virtual *game* worlds have consistently outperformed nongame worlds and offers reasons that makes sense.

PC Magazine for April 24, 2007 has an eight-page article on the question by Cade Metz: "The emperor's new web." It notes that a tour in December 2006 of all the big-name SL business campuses (Starwood's virtual hotel, virtual stores from Circuit City, Toyota, American Apparel and others) found that they had something in common: "None of them contained even a single customer." Additionally, Linden Labs admits that some avatars are probably bots—"residents" that don't have a human being attached to them *at all*. The article isn't an attack; it is well worth reading.

More recently, Frank Rose wrote, "How Madison Avenue is wasting millions on a deserted Second Life" in the August 2007 *Wired*. Considering the source—the most technophilic, shiny-new-toy mass magazine of our time—it's fairly damning. The article makes you wonder: For example, a marketing hotshot at Coca-Cola went into Second Life, looked around at the various storefronts and the hot new hotel—and generally found nobody else around. "It was deserted, almost creepy." But he *still* chose to put money into SL, even though the Coke Virtual Thirst pavilion is generally deserted: "My job is to invest in things that have never been done before. So Second Life was an obvious decision." Wow. The NBA commissioner saw to it that an elaborate NBA island went up in Second Life, after launching a YouTube NBA channel. Results? The YouTube channel has more than 14,000 subscribers and NBA videos have been viewed 23 million times. Second Life? "I think we've had 1,200 visitors. **People tell us that's very, very good**." [Emphasis added.] This article says about 100,000 Americans visit Second Life each week, incidentally…and notes the clear draws for Second Life: "Free money and kinky sex." So, for example, Sexy Beach had a traffic score of 133,000 on a random day in June—compared to Sears' 281 and Coke's 27! Not 27,000: 27, or just over 1/5,000th of Sexy Beach's traffic.

The article notes that you *never* see a genuine crowd in SL—because the technology won't support it. Each processor—each "space"—can handle a maximum of 70 avatars simultaneously. "More than that and the service slows to a crawl, some avatars disappear, or the island simply vanishes." A July article in the Los Angeles *Times* also notes the general failure of real-life businesses in Second Life, and there's a long discussion beginning July 14, 2007 at *TechCrunch.*

Never Let You Go

"Just cancel the @#%$* account" by Tom Spring in the February 2007 *PC World* tells a disturbing story: How difficult it can be to cancel a web service after you sign up for the "free trial." It's no news to AOL users, of course: Getting away from AOL takes serious persistence. The brave reporter signed up for 31 services—then tried to cancel each service. The good news: Nearly half of them (including Ancestry.com, Consumer Reports Online, Salon and Vonage) offered no hassle. At the other extreme, ten scored "big hassle"—including not only AOL but NetZero, Real Rhapsody and Real SuperPass, MSN Internet and-NetZero. It's quite a story.

Quicker Takes

Although neither SACD nor DVD-Audio—the two high-resolution and sometimes surround-sound "successor formats" to CD—has gained widespread market success in the US, neither has either one disappeared. A news report in the April 2007 *Stereophile* indicates that SACD—still the format of choice for several classical record publishers—does much better in other countries. In Japan, one major classical label (Harmonia Mundi) sells *half* of its classical music in SACD. In parts of Europe, HM's regional distributors won't import the CD version of a title that's available in SACD…and Canada and Taiwan distributors will *only* accept SACD imports. Overall, for Harmonia Mundi, 15 to 20% of worldwide sales are SACD.

➢ Podslurping? That's the hot new name for inside data theft: Sticking an iPod (or flash drive or writable CD or whatever) in your corporate PC and downloading all those valuable secrets. The May 8, 2007 *PC Magazine* talks about the problem ("the invasion of the data snatchers") and some solutions (Editors' Choice goes to DeviceLock, but it won't run on Vista). Podslurping: Is there no end to neologisms?

➢ The AAP released its figures for 2006 book sales in the U.S. in late May 2007. There's

good indication that AAP's figures are too low, leaving out tens of thousands of small publishers, but they're good indicators. Total sales continued to rise—notably 2.9% for adult and juvenile books (including 8.5% for adult paperbacks). Title production (as reported by Bowker based on *Books in Print*) also rose, by a little more than 3%—to an astonishing (appalling?) 291,920 new titles and editions in the U.S. Note that the Bowker number is new *editions. A* typical new fiction book may be counted at least three times, in hardback, trade paper, and mass paperback editions. Some categories did fall: Computer books were down more than 11% to a mere 5,498 and cookbooks were down 10% to 2,793.

➢ The Second Circuit Court of Appeals slapped down the FCC's expanded rules for obscenity and indecency, specifically regarding "fleeting expletives" such as Bono's comment at the Golden Globes. The court called the new policy "arbitrary and capricious" and that the FCC hasn't offered reasons to toughen its policy. Astonishingly, the FCC now claims it is "difficult (if not impossible) to distinguish whether a word is being used as an expletive or as a literal description of sexual or excretory functions." The court said, "This defies any commonsense understanding of these words." What flaming liberal media outlet challenged FCC's efforts to make sure we never accidentally hear the F-word or the S-word? Fox, among others.

➢ Do you buy music at iTunes? Are you thrilled about the new, more expensive DRM-free tunes? Did you know that Apple embeds your name and email address into each tune—not encrypted, but in a manner that's readily available? The Electronic Frontier Foundation isn't thrilled about this (or the usual responses), and wonders why it's necessary. Fred von Lohmann's June 5, 2007 post on the matter notes the response of competitor eMusic (which has never used DRM) when asked about such insertions: "We don't put any identifying info on our files."

➢ Ed Felten did a post a while back noting the "goofy formula" used by *Newsweek* to rank "America's best high schools." How goofy? Showing up for an Advanced Placement exam raises your school's rating; *graduating* lowers it. Worse: *Newsweek* excludes selective schools, those with studeyts scoring well above average on the SAT: You literally *can't* be one of America's best schools if you have good students. Felten noted that his hypothetical Monkey High—attended entirely by monkeys—would be the best high school in the universe using *Newsweek*'s metrics. *Newsweek* tries to justify its metric, but Felten notes that three actions continue to improve a school's score: Force students to show up for AP/IB exams; *avoid* high SAT scores; and lower the school's graduation rate. Sounds like a recipe for success to me!

➢ Here's another study refuting the old saw that the younger generation doesn't deal with print. A study by McPheters & Company found that people aged 19 to 34 read *more* than those 35 and older—specifically more print magazines and as many print newspapers.

Interesting & Peculiar Products
Live Recordings by Dead Artists?

It's not a product so much as a technology, and I haven't heard the results yet, but it's intriguing as all get-out. Zenph Studios in Raleigh, North Carolina has this process—mostly software, presumably—to determine from a recording how a pianist was actually playing: The notes, of course, but *how* each key was touched and the positions of the pedals.

The resulting data is used to drive one of today's digitally-driven pianos. Player pianos that do more than just hit notes have been around for quite a while; a data-driven record/playback system that can exactly reproduce the performance of a live musician has been available for at least a decade.

This process takes that one step further, by *deriving* all the key data from an existing recording, presumably a low-fidelity one. You then create a high-fidelity recording or a surround-sound recording by driving a grand piano with the new data.

First up is one of the breakthrough classical piano recordings, Glenn Gould's 1955 recording of Bach's Goldberg Variations. If the claims are right, you'll now be able to hear Gould's playing in stereo or

surround (or binaural for headphone playback) without the tape hiss and other problems. That recording is out now on Sony BMG Masterworks. Next (in an 18-record deal), Art Tatum's 1933 *Piano Starts Here*.

I haven't actually heard this done, but the idea is at least plausible. The foundation that preserves Glenn Gould's work has endorsed the recording.

The One-Terabyte Hard Drive

It took a bit longer than some of us anticipated (and it's from a different company than I expected, since I assumed Seagate would get there first), but it's here now: the Hitachi Deskstar 7K1000. One drive (five platters), one terabyte—or, rather, one trillion bytes. That's 9% less capacity than a terabyte, which would be a kilobyte to the fourth power or 1024x1024x1024x1024, which comes out to 1,099,511.6 million bytes. It's a 7,200RPM drive, as are most high-capacity desktop drives. The July 2007 *PC World* review gives it a "very good" 83 score. It's speedy, doing particularly well for file searches. (It has a 32MB cache, which probably helps a lot.) I find the one negative point a little odd: They call the drive "pricey" and refer to its "premium price." It costs $399—a little less than forty cents a gigabyte. Somehow, that doesn't seem all that excessive.

Editors' Choices and Other Winners

PC Magazine for May 22, 2007 gives an Editors' Choice to the $250 Canon ImageClass MF4150. It's a laser all-in-one (printer/scanner/copier/fax) with built-in duplexing, a 250-sheet paper tray, a 35-page automatic document feeder and great speed with superb text output. It's also fairly compact, with a 15.4x16.8" footprint (17.7" high). It's monochrome only, but for many office or library uses that might be an advantage.

A printer roundup for small-office/home-office printers in the May 22, 2007 *PC Magazine* yields *four* Editors' Choices, including the Canon ImageClass MF4150 just noted. HP's Officejet Pro L7680 All-in-one is a color inkjet unit that costs $400 and runs faster than some laser units; it also offers surprisingly low-cost printing for an inkjet ($0.015/page for mono). For the same price, the Xerox 6180N offers color laser printing with excellent speed and paper capacity; it's a little more expensive on a per-page basis. Finally, the $1,000 Lexmark C534dn offers high capacity (it's rated for 100,000 pages per month) and excellent speed with low operating costs. All four printers come with built-in duplexing.

Now here's a phone that's a *serious phone*, and the June 5, 2007 *PC Magazine* awards it an Editors' Choice. The Nokia N9S has two cameras (one of them 5 megapixels), includes GPS mapping, has a "sublime" web browser, plays "sweet music" and comes with great 3D games. It's the "most powerful multimedia phone in the U.S."—although all those features do mean you have to recharge the thing *every day*. There is one other little negative feature: $750. *For a phone.*

PC World's July 2007 roundup of camcorders that record either to mini-DVDs or hard disks yields somewhat surprising results: The DVD camcorders offered better video quality (even though they use the same format). The single Best Buy goes to Sony's $630 DCR-DVD408 DVD Handycam. Oddly, a picture of the top-performing hard disk camcorder (JVC's $600 Everio GZ-MG155) also shows a Best Buy logo, but it's not on the third-place features comparison.

An antivirus roundup in the June 2007 *PC World* awards the Best Buy to Kaspersky Anti-Virus 6 ($50 with $35 renewal); it's expensive but effective and responds to new outbreaks rapidly. Note that these are standalone antivirus products, not suites; I believe the Zone Alarm suite uses some version of Kaspersky antivirus software.

Which notebook computers have the power to run Vista effectively? *PC World* tested 15 laptops for a June 2007 roundup. For a desktop replacement the $2,301 HP Pavilion dv9000t gets the Best Buy; it comes loaded with 2GB RAM, a 2GHz dual-core CPU, 17" widescreen display, 120GB (5400RPM) hard disk, HD DVD player and multiformat DVD burner, and 256MB nVidia GeForce Go 7600 graphics—but it also weighs in at 17 pounds. Among ultraportables, the award goes to Dell's $2,150 XPS M1210, weighing in at 4.9 pounds and similarly configured (but with a 12.1" screen, multiformat DVD burner with no high-def option, and a GeForce Go 7400 instead of 7600). The Dell tested out at more than five hours battery life; the HP, 2.5 hours.

If you're looking for an MP3 player—which really means a portable digital music player—you've probably heard one four-letter name often enough to think of it as synonymous with the category. The June 26, 2007 *PC Magazine* roundup doesn't do much to shatter that assumption—with one exception. Oh, sure, Apple iPods get two Editors' Choices, for the 80GB $349 iPod and the 8GB $249 nano—but the $60 Sansa Express beats out the $80 iPod Shuffle as the preferred 1GB Flash player.

Life-Altering Cell Phones?

Just a short snark: The intro page for the April 10, 2007 *PC Magazine* "First Looks" section ends thusly: "Naturally we have the reviews for these, as well as for new spyware blockers, cameras from Canon and Nikon, and 21 other life-altering products."

Well, maybe. I suppose your life is actually altered with every breath you take and every meal you eat. Some of these products appear to have just that much impact.

Software That Just Won't Shut Up

That's the title of Stephen Manes' back-of-magazine column in the May 2007 *PC World*. He talks about "flow"—the state of "losing yourself" in an experience. Or, rather, he starts to talk about it until he's interrupted by a message from his antispyware program, then some email, then another message from his antivirus program… [Here's synchronicity: Just as I was writing that sentence, ZoneAlarm popped up to tell me it had completed its weekly antivirus/antispyware scan. Sorry for the interruption. Where were we?]

> Flow? All of a sudden every programmer alive seems to think it's fine and dandy to interrupt you with news of some trivial incident or meaningless nonevent. Pop-up ads are bad enough; now their equivalents have found their way into stuff that you've paid for to work behind the scenes, not dance on the table and proclaim its glory.

It's an interesting piece and an interesting point. His simple rule: "Don't pipe up unless it's really, really important." Sounds about right.

Affordability and Obscenity

I don't want to come off as a poverty-stricken person railing against those with greater means. We're not poor by any stretch of the imagination; even in American terms we're in decent shape. But sometimes I'm bothered by the excesses of wealth and conspicuous consumption—particularly when those excesses are treated as normal.

Perhaps the most obvious examples are the articles I'm seeing in various places about "green" housing and home remodeling. I'm all in favor of using sustainable practices, reducing energy use, reusing materials and all that. But the "green houses" I've been seeing the most hubbub about are *inherently* not green because they're enormous—as I recall, one house built as a "model for green practice" is somewhere

between 6,000 and 9,000 square feet. As I write this squib, today's paper has a "remodel" piece on a green remodeling job—that resulted in a 5,000 square foot house. That's not green. Unfortunately, these excesses lead to overreaction: an opinion piece in the same paper a couple of weeks back railed against *all* green practices, going so far as to claim that Compact Fluorescent Lights were useless (the reasoning got a little fuzzy, but the writer notably didn't even *consider* the 75% lower energy usage for equivalent lighting).

The "Audio Video Interiors" pull-out section of *Home Theater* is usually an exercise in excess: It's a rare home theater project that isn't in the six-digit range, although there are exceptions. The June 2007 edition had an enormously positive writeup on the *life*|ware home automation systems as making "home automation more accessible, affordable, and sophisticated." This isn't an advertorial (I guess), but it might as well be: The title is "I Want That!" and nary a questioning word is spoken. The writer lost me in the first paragraph discussing one example of use of this "accessible, affordable" system—a *12,000 square foot* contemporary home in Westerville, a suburb of Columbus, Ohio. I don't even want to think about the utility bills in winter for a 12,000 square foot house in Ohio—but I suppose a fellow with 15 video displays, 36 audio zones, 120 security zones (with 22 cameras), 19 HVAC climate zones and 295 lighting zones probably doesn't worry about energy bills or usage. There's a much more "affordable" instance in the second part of the article, showing how this system could fit in little, energy-efficient houses: In this case, a mere *5,500 square feet* (more than four times the size of our entirely-adequate rancher, but who's measuring) with only eight video screens—and the "automation and entertainment aspect" only cost about $50,000, a mere tenth what the first house's did.

More Audiophile Blather

Jon Iverson contributes an op-ed at the start of the June 2007 *Stereophile*…and in the first paragraph says "The music industry as we know it, based on sales of some kind of physical medium, is over." Not "weakening." Not "being impacted by downloads," which may have passed the 10% mark. *Over*.

Oh, CDs "and even LPs will remain available" because they're so easy and cheap to make but "they've become irrelevant to the mass market and to the future of audiophile recordings." Irrelevant to the mass market. Still 90% of the market, but that's irrelevant.

Which would be amusing, except that he goes on to tell us that high-end audiophilia has a *great* future thanks to all those low-rez downloads by people who apparently can't hear the difference? Why? Because those iPod-using "younguns" (his word) will find lots of music they really like and fill up their iPods. Then comes the leap: "Then, an ever-growing percentage of them get so hooked by the music/audio thing that they set out on a quest for better sound."

Not just an ever-growing *number* who somehow become convinced that the songs on their iPods should sound better, but an ever-growing *percentage.* Which is, presumably, why everybody who plays CDs today does so on high-end equipment. After all, an ever-growing percentage eventually reaches 100%--or at least a majority.

I don't get it. Seems like it's the other way around: Lots of people who used to get CD-quality sound from, uh, CDs seem to be more than happy with lower-quality downloads. Iverson could be right, but his argument doesn't hold water. Of course, high-end audio is frequently a matter of faith in any case.

A Whole New Web?

That's the title over Jim Louderback's editorial in the June 5, 2007 *PC Magazine*—and it would appear that Louderback's a bit disenchanted with Web 2.0. He went to the Web 2.0 Expo in San Francisco in April and lists "the seven shiny new things I stumbled on—and why they signal the end of the world as we know it." And you think *I* get cranky at times…

First there's the "virtuous circle" of web development—where developers create tools to help people create blogs that talk about the tools which inspire more people to buy the tools and create more blogs that talk about… "This sort of self-referential nonsense lasts for only so long."

Twitter, of course, which "lets you annoy your friends with all the mundane things you do every day"…"and with room for only 140 characters, the shallower the better!"

"Headcasting"—you know, what Justin.tv does. "You simply staple a camera to your head and stream your life to the world in real time." Ustream.tv means *anyone* can do this.

Mash-ups. "It's what happens when two Web 2.0 start-ups work together to create something that might actually be useful." (Yes, I know he's got that wrong, since many or most mash-ups involve established outfits like Google Maps. But I couldn't resist

this line:) "Alas, unlike Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, most of these taste terrible and stink like a wet cat."

"Making stone soup"—what happens when several "destitute Web 2.0 startups" get together and see "they have almost enough features to create a real product that someone might actually want to use (but probably won't pay for)."

Louderback thinks it's starting to look like 1999. I think he overstates the level of nonsense—but there surely is a fair amount of nonsense. Is headcasting really the wave of the future, or even the present?

Reality Check on Mobile TV

It's just a half page in the June 26, 2007 *PC Magazine* and leads with this comment—which should come as no surprise to anyone who's thinking about it: "Cellular providers, mobile device makers, and TV networks are trying to convince you that everyone is watching mobile and online video. The truth, according to a recent JupiterResearch study, is that adoption rates are stagnant; most people prefer the boob tube."

When asked what devices they use to watch *TV shows and movies* (as opposed to little YouTube videos), 92.4% said TV; PCs came second at 6.4%. Cell phones? 0.3%. Other portable devices? 1.6%. What do people watch on PCs and mobile devices? 63% of PC owners surveyed weren't interested; 85% of mobile device owners said the same. Surprisingly, for those who *do* watch TV on these devices, full-length TV programs came in tops: 18% of PC owners, 8% of mobile device owners.

URL: citesandinsights.info/civ7i10.pdf